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The Great Flood of 1851

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of the fight. The regiment had marched many hours before it went into battle and the men were completely tired out. While they were under fire they were placed on the opposite slope of a low hill which partially protected them from the shot and shell of the enemy. In order to make this cover as secure as possible the men were directed to lie down. While in this position private Schoonover fell asleep. He could not tell how long he slept, but probably only a very short time. He was quite chagrined to think that he had slept under such circumstances and said nothing about it until two or three days afterwards. He finally heard some of his comrades relating like experiences and then told his own. He reached home safely, and resumed his old avocation as a printer. In the spring of 1862 he purchased *The Story County Advocate*, at Nevada, and changed the name to *The Reveille*. After publishing it a year and a half, he sold it to Hon. John M. Brainard, now of Boone. Not long after this sale his money was stolen, when he determined to re-enlist in the military service. He therefore joined Company A, Twenty-third Iowa Infantry, in which he served until the end of the war. He was on the Red River expedition and served awhile in garrison duty at Galveston. His muster-out occurred at New Orleans, June 11, 1865. After reaching home he was employed for awhile on *The Marshall County Times*, but in 1866 was elected recorder of Story county. He died in Nevada in 1867, before the expiration of his term of office. He was a brave soldier, and an intelligent and versatile pioneer editor, of whom many pleasant recollections still survive.

THE GREAT FLOOD OF 1851.

It has been occasionally mentioned during the time which has elapsed since it occurred, but generally in a merely incidental way. Its history is yet to be written. Contemporary

newspapers seem to have given it little attention, devoting to its phenomena and results only brief paragraphs. Editors in new countries, where "immigration" is so welcome, and always promoted, are little given to exploiting the adverse features of a year or a season, however temporary they may really be. Doubtless the best account of some of its incidents that has yet appeared is that of Major Hoyt Sherman, which was incorporated into "The History of Steamboating on the Des Moines River," by Tacitus Hussey, and appeared in THE ANNALS for April, 1900, pp. 341-44. We have invited several of "the oldest inhabitants" of our State to prepare an article for these pages, giving an account of that unexampled flood, the damaging effects of which were felt throughout the west, but nowhere more severely than in the valley of the Des Moines. One gentleman, who has been a most welcome contributor to our pages, has undertaken the task, though some time will probably elapse before his article can be written. It is a work of much difficulty at this time to collect the necessary data, owing to the fact that most of those who looked upon the waste of waters which made the long reaches of the Des Moines river now a great lake and again a rushing torrent, migrated to other regions, or long ago passed away. In October last Mr. John A. Miller, of Keosauqua, kindly presented to the Historical Department the first volume of *The Western American*, which was published in that city. It is a well-edited country weekly of that olden time—a four-page folio—"set up" and printed at home, and conducted with much ability. It was published by L. D. & H. Morris. In the first issue, dated July 5, 1851, we find the following account of that long wet season and of the successive inundations. While it is brief, it graphically describes the gloomy outlook which confronted the pioneer settlers of our State, depicting conditions which it is difficult to imagine or appreciate at this time:

RAINS, RIVERS, FLOODS AND CROPS.—Never, perhaps, in the history of the country, have the people been visited with such a complication of

afflictions as has fallen upon them for the last two months. During that time we have been visited, at short intervals, with many of the heaviest storms we have ever experienced. For six or eight weeks it has rained almost without cessation. The consequence has been that all the rivers in the State have been swollen to an extent never before known, producing suffering and devastation all along their borders. The meanest rill has "roaring fled its channel," adding its might to the great aggregation of destruction. Three different times the Des Moines has overflowed its banks at this place, driving our merchants and others on Front street back to the bluffs. No one can estimate the amount of damage that has been done. Along the principal rivers the loss of stock, crops, rails, lumber, &c., has been immense; in some instances houses with all their effects have been swept away. The business of the entire country has suffered a severe shock from this great calamity. But the worst feature in the whole matter is the destruction of crops. We have no disposition to croak, but set it down from reliable data that there cannot be more than half crops of wheat and corn. Many farms have not an acre in cultivation. The continuous rains with which the earth has been drenched, prevented some from planting, whilst much of that put in the ground was washed out or rotted where it lay. There can be no question but that the prospect for crops in this State is gloomy enough; and we venture the prediction, that there will not be corn and wheat enough raised in our State to supply home consumption.

AVAILABLE LAW BOOKS IN THE TERRITORY OF IOWA.

The excellency of the products of manual labor depends as much upon the tools as upon the skill of the workmen. Now since that is equally true of intellectual effort, the work of men who use books as tools ought to be measured by the equipment of their libraries. This truth we should bear in mind when we read the reports of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa. The judges and lawyers of that day must have been greatly handicapped by the lack of many useful volumes. The following memorial, which is here printed for the first time, reveals the embarrassing condition under which the pioneer jurist carried on his work:

Memorial of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Iowa Territory and members of the bar of said Court to the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

Your petitioners respectfully ask from your honorable body an appro-

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